

THE
FIRST DISH
AT THE
WILSHIRE FEAST,
NOVEMBER 9. 1674.

OR,
A SERMON

Preached at LAWRENCE FURY to those
that there offered their Peace-
offerings, and went thence to dine at
MARCHANT-TAYLOR-HALL.

By SAMUEL ANNESLEY L.L.D. Minister of the
Gospel, at John Evangelists London.

If by any means I may preach to them, that they will be saved, and might save some of them, Rom. 11. 14.

God is able to make all Grace abound towards you, that ye may have all sufficiency in all things, and abound in every good work, 2 Cor. 9. 8.

THE
FIRST DISTRICT
AT THE
WILSON REPT
No. 100
A SERMON

that there offered their peace-
offerings and went thence to the
Machabean-Laver.

Col. John B. ...
By Samuel ...

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The Epistle, &c.

to be sufficient by any. Other Counties may see, & see
easily they may do themselves good. I hope they will
see you should be singular. Have not this put ma-
ny Counties upon feasting? such a County feasts, and
why should not yet? will it not better follow? such
a County invited Christ to their feast, and why should
not we? O that I could put every County into a flame of
contention! but tis onely, who should doe most for the
suppressing of wickednesse; removing of ignorance:
promoting of godlinesse. And for your County, that
I may moreably incite you. The men of
Wil-shire, which were men that had understand-
ing of the Times, to know what England ought
to do about five hundred of them met at a Feast,
and all their barben are willing to further their
pious Projects. This is the unfeigned desire of

Your Servant for Jesus sake,

SAMUEL ANNELEY.

THE

THE
FIRST DISH
AT THE
WILLSHIRE FEAST
NOVEM. 9. 1654

1 CHRON. 12. 32.

And of the children of Machar, which were men that had understanding of the Times, to know what Israel ought to do: the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment.



Forbear a Preface, because I have so much work in the Text, To improve time at the first, that we may not want it at the last, I shall fall directly upon the words.

And of the children of Machar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know

In an historical relation, you expect no other choice of words, then only fit expressions, neither will a narrative well endure a garnish: for many causes. While the story is true & the truth is manifest & yet in some cases the highest strains of Rhetorical elegance, can but sufficiently adorn noble Truth.

And what will you say to this Text? here is an extraordinary emphasis in Hebrewline; and an extraordinary Metonymy in our sentence; and a significant Trajection in the next, but I will shew you, not tell you what there is.

And of the children of Issachar] a quiet middling tribe, neither the head nor the tail. In the solemn and prophetic blessing of the Tribes, both by *Jacob* and *Moses*, there's not much good promised to them, and therefore the more observable to read such things of them. They

Were men that had understanding of the times] here's their excellency, and 'tis excellently exprest *אֲנָשִׁים יָדְעֵי יָמֵיהֶם*, *knowing understanding to the times* - the word [*knowing*] respects the mind in way of apprehension: the word [*understanding*] respects the mind in way of consideration, when the mind doth accurately discern, and judge of things. And the word [*times*] *lagarithim*, the 70. well renders *us. et. usque* the occasion of time, and ther's a Metonymy of the adjunct, time being put for the things done in time; *q. d.* they had given themselves much to observe seasons, wherein matters of moment were meetest to be done, and by observing the occurrences of affaires, they got much experience, and thereby much wisdom. And this their understanding was not for meer speculation; but

To know what Israel ought to do] (or if you admit of a trajection) *that Israel might know what to do*. They instructed them that were any way under them, or that came to them for advice.

The Heads of them were 200.] the division of *Canaan* unto the several Tribes, is not altogether unlike the division of our land into Shires. And the officers of their particular Tribes, do somewhat resemble our Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, Mayors, Bayliffs, Constables, and other Officers of Shires, Cities, Burroughs, Hundreds, and Parishes.

And all their brethren were at their commandment] *gual pitem super eis coram*, because the command proceeds from the mouth. Their prudence was so highly esteemed, that every one was willing to do what they advised. In short, here were 200. of the children of *Issachar*, men that had understanding of

of the times, that knew and considered what was seasonable to be done, and all their brethren were willing to follow their advice. Whence you may learn this Doctrine.

That where some few hundreds of countrymen meet, that understand the duty of the times, they may lead their whole country along with them, for their general good. Here were two hundred of the tribe of Issachar met together at Hebron, then the chief City of the Nation, and they met at a Feast of their own providing, for *vers. 40. The men of Issachar—brought bread, meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oyle, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.*

They manage the proper duty of the times with such understanding and discretion, that all the country whences they came, are willing to do what they advise them.

The Doctrine is so natural, I need not call in Scriptures to avouch it. Take one that will do more, then prove it, *2 Sam. 20. 16. 22.* one wise woman of the City went unto all the people in her wisdom, and perswades them to what preserves them from destruction.

Quest. 1. Wherein doth this understanding consist? I will keep within the very words of the text, and what they plainly import.

Resp. 1. In a true knowledge and apprehension of things, as they are in their own nature. To know the nature of a divine command, and the nature of a christian duty. And to speak plainly in a word, such knowledge you will never attain to, but by the Scripture. I remember *Augustin* closeth his commendation of Scripture thus; *That whatsoever a man hath learned, extra Scripturam, if it be hurtfull, there 'tis condemned; if it be profitable, there 'tis sound. There you shall abundantly find all those things, which you can profitably learn elsewhere, and those things which you can learn no where else, are there taught with wonderful height, yet condescension. Prov. 3. 4. Forget not the Law, keep the Commandment, so shalt thou have good understanding in the sight of God and man.* [Good understanding] is good success, the Hebrew word signifies both, and there is good reason why it should, because of the near dependance of the things themselves. Good understanding, doth beget good success.

3. This

2. This understanding consists in a due consideration of their duty. I dare appeal to your own consciences; whether consideration be not a principall ingredient in the composition of all graces. How come persons to repent of sin when do they set themselves against sin? when they consider the evill of it, and the danger they are exposed to, by it. When do persons look after Christ, but when they consider the necessity of him, and that they are undone without him, that he invites them to come, and 'tis best so take his invitation? How come men to get this practical wisdom, this understanding in the text, but by enquiring what is their duty, and considering the fit circumstances of performing it? *Job saith, (Job 23. 15.) when I consider, I am afraid. q. d. When I weigh in my mind all Gods proceedings with me, I am afraid. When conscience is asleep, consideration will awaken it; men could never run so madly into sin, were they not inconsiderate.*

3. Diligence is requisite to this understanding. This is implied in both the other; you will never get a right knowledge of things, without a diligent searching after knowledge: you will never consider rightly of things without a diligent fixing of your hearts upon your duty. *The diligent hand (saith Solomon) makes rich, rich in grace, rich in all good works; a lazy christian is alwayes a beggary christian. You know one of the first curses that God denounced against man, was, in the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread. Now though all curse be taken away by Christ, yet this lies still as a a cross in the way of a christian, that even in spirituals, he cannot earn his bread, he can never get, nor improve any grace without sweating for it. Gods free gift doth not hinder, but further and encourage labour and diligence. Eccles. 9. 10, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.* This brings to the second. *Quest.*

Quest. 2. What understanding ought we to have of the times?

I must intreat you to be serious in the answer to this enquiry, for it cannot but shew the common practice of the generality.

generality of men. This understanding of the times consists in these three things.

Resp. 1. In the understanding of the general duties of all times: There are some duties which run through the whole course of our lives; we ought to live always in the fear of God, *Acts 17. 30.* God calls upon all men every where to repent: we ought always to make Religion our business, to do nothing to Gods dishonour, but to put forth our selves to the utmost to walk acceptably before him; to bind our selves to our good behaviour: Yet do not mistake, as if the strongest engagements to be wholly for God, had any the least bondage in them; but I would have Religion to be like the marriage bond, That as there is none more strong, so there is none more desirable, more comfortable. I would have you al to entertain Religion with something fixable to the *Israelites* entertainment of the Ark, *1 Sam. 4. 5.* When the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came into the Camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout; so that the earth rang again: so that the enemies of holiness may cry out, *Who unto us, and who unto us,* who can deliver us out of the hand of this mighty God, who will smite prophane persons with all manner of plagues?

And another general duty of all times, is to be profitable unto others: to do what we possibly can to promote Religion in the world. The Apo. in *Eph. 4. 12, 13.* compares the collective body of christians to the natural body of an infant, and Christ to the soul; as the child grows in all the parts of the body, so the soul puts forth it self in all rational operations. Now every member grows not out of self-interest, but common interest, and Christ communicates of his spirit according to such growth; only here's the dissimilitude: let a child grow never so fast, yet till growth doth not make any addition of new members unto the body, there's not so much as a finger, or a toe, the growth for all the growth: but now Religion spreads itself like life, it communicates it self unto those that are yet unborn, it makes addition of members in the mystical body of Christ. And here is not any gracious seed, but can be truly sown with Faith, hope, and love, *Acts 14. 17.* I should not wonder, if they had sown of that seed, in the *desert*, and it should have sprung up in a day.

Secondly, The understanding of the times consisteth in the understanding of the particular duties of special times: every season of a mans life brings its particular duties along with it. Remember thy Creatour in the daies of thy youth: doe not spend the morning of your life in vanitie, so let young men improve their strength, and old men their experiences for God, and the good of others. But the Text fits us with two adjuncts of time very considerable.

First, they were times of division, alteration and changes: and what set ours? they had been long harraught with civil war, between *Saul* and *David*, between *David* and *Ishbosheth*, and they were yet unquiet: now at such a time the sons of *Israhel*, many of them shepherds, most of them plaine country men: These knew what to doe, this shews their wildness: Goe you and doe likewise. But what shall we doe? I will tell you what, and give you a president for it. 1. Pet. 3. 1. *Be ye as well doers, that with well doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, there's your duty.* Daniel 6. 4. 5. *Then the Presidents and Princes sought to find occasion against Daniels concerning the Kingdom, but they could find none occasion, nor fault: for as much as he was faithfull, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, we shall not find any weakness against this Daniel, except we find it against him, concerning the law of his God. There's your president.* Observe the time of it, 'twas when *Darius* had broken the head of gold, the Babylonian monarchy, and now *Daniel* is againe gracious to *exalt*, and prefer'd in hisse above all the enemies of the church. These could find (no occasion) no matter of accusation, nor colour of suspicion of unfaithfulness [nor be able to find any error] in many, mighty, ravous, subtil counsels departed to find him faulty, or colourably faulty in the same: more as to great affairs, in so tickle times (except we find him opposing *As the law of his God*) they must proceed to sue against God himselfe: or they can do nothing against him. Let us then, walke to exactly, that nothing may have nothing against you, and if the world should say, what is a creature, and he commanding

Quest. 2. How is it likely that a few understanding men may probably ingage all their country-men to performe the duties of the times they live in, I shall only name a two fold ground.

Reas. 1. Men know the state of their owne country better then strangers can, to speake directly *ad rem*: here you are not from all parts of your country. Doe not you know the state of your country better then ten times your number of any other men in the world? One can say, I was born in such a place, where the Gospel was never powerfully preached in my time. Another can say, I live in a place, where profanenes doeth exceedingly abound. And a third can tell stories of the ranting, and licentiousnesse of apostate Christians. Again, you know the temper of your owne neighbours and country men, better then others can: you know in what places people be incorrigible, and men must deale with them as with thornes, as *David* expressed it: you know where people are fickle and unstedd, that they must be strooke into a good liking of sound truth, or they will fly out, & be worse by means of bettering them. And

Secondly, Men of the same country are interested in one anothers affections, which doth exceedingly fit them for the doing & receiving of good: men will take that from a country-man, a neighbour, a friend, which they will not from another. Let me tell you plainly, you have carried your selves ill in the places of your abode, if you have not gotten some esteem and credit, more then in places where you are not knowne, that a reproofe or an admonition will come with authority from you. Men commonly love the places of their birth, and their country-men among whom they were bred, being more willing to doe for them then for others: and the place of our nativity and education doe challenge, and looke for something from us. This is deservedly put into *Sions* lamentation, that of all the sons shee brought up, there was none to comfort her. Now if God give you opportunity, will you not endeavour, as you read of *Mordecai* *Ester*, 10.3. *Mordecai* the Jewe great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and seeking peace to all his seed.

But I haſt ſet to the application, and begin with an act of Reprooſe, wherein if any ſhall thinke I am too kene for them thinke withall, that I ſhall be glad to be miſtaken, in the ſins that I reprove, if you can plead for your country in any particular, not guilty. But if theſe ſins be among you, the two edged ſword had need to cut, and therefore I will not ſay, beare with me, but as *Jerem* to the Shechemites, *Blasphemy* *you men of Shechem, this God may haue ſworn with you* There are five ſins I ſhall reprove, and with the reproof propoſe a remedy, that as I haue the ſore, I may apply a plaſter.

First, *Profaneſſe*: Are there not with you, even with you, any with us in this congregation, ſome profane *Eſau's*, that will hunt away their bliſſing, and game away their bliſſing, and ſwear away their bliſſing, and drinke away their bliſſing, that ſcorn preciſeneſſe, and hate reproofe: ſo ſuch as theſe, I am ſent with heavy tidings; I muſt tell you from a holy God, that when you can laugh no more at holineſſe, God will laugh for ever at your deſtruction: that when you have wearyed your ſelves in worke of darkneſſe, you ſhall have your portion in everlaſting darkneſſe; I remember a ſtory of your owne country, tis of Roger Biſhop of Salisburie, that built Shirborne Caſtle, and the Caſtle of the De- viſes (accounted once one of the goodlieſt Caſtles of Eu- rope) when he was ready to die, tis reported, that *inter mor- tem, et vita tormenta, vivit vulnera, et mors neſcitur*, Be- twene feare of death, and torment of life; he would not live, and yet he knew not how to die. How ſoone may this be your caſe, remember *Eſau* Heb. 12. 16, 17 that profane perſon *Eſau*, who for an handful of meat ſold his birthright, for you know how heaſty afterward when he would have inherited the bliſſing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with teares. I hope better things of you, but pray then, doe what you can to ſtop the inundation of profaneſſe in the places where you live, or have acquaintance. What is the remedie?

Put downe the multitude of the houſes in your country. There are the peſt-houſes of the nation: it were well if they were ſhut up, for therein the plague of profaneſſe ſpreadeth

over the land: but I forbear them at present; this being one of the projects wherewith I shall close my sermon.

Secondly, The second sin is *straying* from the running of the old serpents that when he cannot keepe persons, profane; he will drive them into the other extreme; if profaness be stare men in the face, and looke dreadfully, then a smacke of religion, with a rigorous embracing of some unsound opinion will set them in the highest forme of Christianity presently. O beloved, it is sad to consider, how this leprosie spreads, what more ordinary then for persons when their consciences are a little awakened, and thereby disquieted by the word, supake the spirit of some error, and quice all againe presently. Heretofore upon the preaching of the word, you should have persons pricked *at the heart, and cry out, Men and brethren, what shall we doe to be saved?* But now if strictness be pressed, that's *Legal*; if repentance be urged, that is *not fine enough*; when poore soules are a little startled by a routing sermon, satan hath his emissaries to come upon them, let them but lift themselves in such a congregation, take up such an opinion, the worke is done, they are Saints presently.

The cure of this, is get a godly Minister into your country, if you cannot get a sufficient number settled, yet you may procure some godly learned, prudent Ministers to preach up & down in the country, from place to place, that there may not be a darke corner in the country. Be as vigilant for *error* as satan is for *error*: let not satan set up his flag, but indeavour (what in you lies) that the spirit of God may lift up a standard against it. You may probably meet with reproaches here, but goe on, feare not. When by *Jeromes* meenes some hirestocks lost their liberties of teaching their error, *Augustine* writes thus to him, *I have alwayes considered thee, but now much more, if my estate be capable of addition, all that love the truth will reverence thee, and which is a greater glory, all heretics dread thee.* Goodness, I would recommend unto you *John* *Chrysostome*, *prudent*. He sent *Presbys* and *Levites* to preach in the cities of *Judea*, and his Princes accompanied them, to give countenance and authority to the doctrine. *A Church* *is* *not* *built* *by* *the* *word* *only*, *but* *also* *by* *the* *deeds* *of* *the* *word*.

I think, the third sin is *straying* from the running of the old serpents, which is to be

thing else but a finely composed and well acted tragedie or
melodrama, a pagant of pious pretences of godlines, *hypocrites*
speaking of some kinde of Christians, faith, They were bur-
roughs and they had only *higared religion* written up
on them.

16 And Christ calls them *whited Sepulchres*, they have religion
written in capital golden letters upon the outside, but in-
wardly they are nothing but stinking carrionse. O that you
would deale plainly with your owne soules as there any here,
that serves God with a reserve, that quarrells with scripture
for requiring more strictnesse, then they are willing to pra-
ctise? I remember it is given as one character of the *Mandukes*,
that they labour for nothing more, then *not to find what they*
feele. Is not this the character of some here? I am sure it is of
too many professors that pretend to search after the know-
ledge of their duties, but they are loath to find it: pretend they
would seeke out their secret sins, but they are loath to part
with them.

For the cure of this. Truly I am here almost at a stand;
this disease is *Iudithium thelagyrum*, this kinde of Christians
can doe by sermons, as Mountebanks doe by poyson, they
are fore-armed, that they cannot worke upon them; let Mi-
nistres say what they can, they will practise what they list:
this disease is like the stone in the bladder, the remedies spend
their strength ere they come at the place affected: reproote,
and conviction and counsell, have spent their strength, before
they can come neere their hearts, but I must attempt a cure.
The only remedie I know, is a *use of true repentance*, this may
set them right, and that I may set it on with efficacy. I will
give you a scripture instance, what a cure repentance
wrought, in a calcas bad as this, (*so far as any sin may be*
compared with sinfullity) there were some hundreds of one
tribe met together, and a sad meeting it was, but it proved a
good one at last, it is the tribe of *Benjamin*, I mention what for
there sin were brought in doe men only, Judges 20. 17. in the
day of *Shiloh* there were 4000 fighting men of that
tribe. The greater number of them in the names of *Abiah*
were but 400, in the fifth part of what they were, and
their

their great sorrow upon their repentance they indubitably increased, out of a small handball: sin brings low, but God upon our serious repentance, can quickly increase us, and make our latter end better then our beginning.

Fourthly, A fourth sin is *uselesse*: how many are there that are rather like what Jacob foretold of *Issachar*, then what *Esaie* here records of them, *that he is like an ass, couching downe betweene two harnesses, because rest is good*. Many men care not so they can but slug in quiet and rub out their time without trouble and danger; if they can do so, they take themselves to be very wise men: as if men were sent into the world, to have only such a narrative made of them, as there is of some Judges of *Israel*; they had so many cities, so many children, and they rode upon so many asses, and that is all you read of them. So such a man he got a great estate, and he marched his children very well, and perhaps when he is dead, you may hear of some charitable legacie in his *Testament*, but not by his *will*; thank you death, or you should never have heard of any good at all, *and but a little then*. If this belesse be creeping upon any of you, for cure of it

Take a holy revenge upon your selves, do you finde your hearts cling close to the world, 'tis like the cleaving of a cold hand unto a hot fire-iron in extremitie of weather, 'tis some refreshing at present, but it teares the flesh off when removed. You cannot let your hands cleave to the world, but it will doe worse then burne your fingers. It is a prettie passage (me thinks) that I heard of a Gentleman as he rode by the way, an old man begged something of him, and he gave him a groat, when he rode a little farther he bethought himselfe, a groat that might have served 3 or 4, upon these thoughts he rode backe to the poore man, and demanded his groat, which when he requied him, he gave him a shilling, saying to himselfe, *now I am revenged*.

Fifthly, The fifth sin I shall reprove is *Envy*; and this is the understanding great men have of themselves, they know how to make their advantage of the times in which they live, and to serve the times; they can come into the way of the times, O the late *parliament* of the times, and *parliament*!

that if they can but cringe themselves into preferment, and get some fat gobbers of wealth, or bladder of honour, blown up with stinking breath like their own: they will venenate the displeasure of God; and what not? Do any of your consciences tell you, you are such? let me adde this for conscience to chew upon; you shall be filled with your own waies. You can complement with God, and give him good language, but nothing else, so God will give you good words again, but turn you off with, I know you not; or as Christ said to Judas, Friend, wherefore art thou come? betrayest thou the son of man with a kisse? it were better for thee thou hadst never been born. Can any of you kisse Christ, and betray him? bow the knee to him, and smite him upon the head? Friends, what do you think Religion is? do you think it is a meet juggle, a Blinde to make use of? a Servant to wait upon your designes? are these things becoming christians? but I must forbear.

For the cure of it. *Be convinced of the vanity of the creature.* Do but, saith Cyprian, withdraw thy self a little, suppose thy self on the top of some mountain, where thou mightest safely see *fluctuantis mundi turbines*, the world in its proper colours, thou wouldst pitie the world, and rather blesse God for thy being delivered from the snares of it, then desire to have much of it. Alas poor rich man! thou dost shift, and shuffle, and make shipwrack of faith, and conscience, and all, to get — what I pray you? nay, I know not what, all thou canst possibly get, will not buy a plaister broad enough to lay upon thy wounded conscience: this is directly crosse to *Ephes. 5: 15, 16. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fooles, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the dayes are evil.*

The second use is of *Exhortation*.

First, Be perswaded every one of you to *mind Religion seriously*. You know Christ tells us, that towards the end of the world, the times shall be like those before the flood, men shall be eating and drinking, &c. but in this unlike them; for then one might have a temporal deliverance by the faith of another: but now, *two shall be in one house, the one shall be taken, (to glory) and the other left (to perish)* two shall be in one bed, the one shall be taken (into Abraham's bosome) the other shall

shall be left (to the devil's torment) a believing wife cannot then save an unbelieving husband; a gracious father, cannot then save an ungracious child. Christians, 'tis a personal reformation I would first urge you to. Begin with your own hearts, and with your own lives. Take up *Job's* resolution, *My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live*: when you hear a Sermon, let every man think he is spoken to, in particular. This is one reason why the Commandments are given in the second person singular, Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, &c. every man is to apply them unto himselfe, as if God spake to him by name. This is it that loseth so many Sermons, aye, and so many soules to, viz. the want of personal application. Or that I could therefore speak to you all, as if I were speaking but to one man. *Rom. 14. 12. Every one of us must give account of himselfe to God*: therefore *1 Thes. 2. 11. I exhort and charge every one of you (as a father doth his children) that ye would walk worthy of God, who calls you unto his Kingdom and glory.*

Secondly, Set up the Power of godliness in your families: as ever you would have a part in *Abraham's* blessings, take part in his works, *Gen. 18, 19. I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord.* He had as big a family to instruct as any of you: there were above three hundred in it, able to bear arms. But I will give you an instance beyond his, and 'tis of *Solomon*, pray observe it, for the world can never match it. He had a thousand wives, and could give an account (a true one, though a sad one) of every one of their souls, *Eccles. 7. 28.* And for the number of his servants, 'tis not easie to specify the quantitie: how many servants must every one of his wives have? he had seven hundred wives which were Princesses, their retinue was certainly great: he had forty thousand stalls of horses for his charres: I judge hereby what a world of servants there must be belonging to his Court. You read his costly provision, that it was the greatness of his family: *1 King. 4. 22, 23. And Solomon provided for one day an hundred measures of fine flour, and an hundred measures of meal (that is three hundred bushells of flour, and five hundred bushells of meal) seven fat oxen, and many asses and kine, and an hundred*

hundred sheepe, besides hares, and ear-bushes, and fallow-deere, and fatted fowl: and yet his family, though so great, made well ordered that, (1 King. 10. 15.) the Queen of Sheba was amazed to see it, nay more, his servants were so seasoned with Religion, that about five hundred years after their children are in a speciall manner recorded by the spirit of God, to be the most eminent of their times for Religion. Ezra. 2. 58, The children of Solomons servants, were three hundred ninety and two: they are with the forwardest to enjoy freedom of Gods worship, and though others sturke from their first subscription, so did not they; not a man of them, Nehem. 7. 60, The children of Solomons servants were three hundred ninety and two. This cannot but shame us, that have so few to take care of, and yet take so little care of them. The Lord set it up on our hearts.

Thirdly. Combine together to advance Religion in your Countie. You know what God commanded his people to do for the land of their captivitie; where they were in a condition of slavery. Jerem. 29. 7. *Seek the peace of the City, whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace.* What then should you do for the place of your Nativity? Christ takes it for granted, that in Nazareth, where he had been brought up, *They will surely use this Proverb, Physician heal thy self, whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum do also here in thy own countrey*; and 'twas their opposition to the Gospel, that hindered him from answering their expectation. Friends, I hope that opposition to the Gospel will not hinder you, but that every one will be willing to do his utmost for your own Countie. It is easie to heape up instances in all histories, what good Patriots have done for their countie, but I forbear; and will only urge a raritie of your Countie: the like whereof, I do not remember that ever I heard or read: I mean that Cathedral which was longer in building then the Jewes Temple; for it was above fifty years in building: and do you not think the Founders did intend by proportioning the doors to the moneths, and the windows to the daies, and the pillars to the houres of the year, that you should learn this influence

Eden. Not a month, nay, not a day, nay, not an hour should be let passe without something of Religion? And what may you now do for promoting Religion in your County? what may you not do, if you will set to it in good earnest?

You know in our constitution of Parliaments, we have the members chosen from every County, and though some Counties have but a very few, yet their County expects good from them. Might we suppose now all the members of Parliament to be chosen out of one County, and that Parliament so constituted, to be the *supream Authority*. O what would all those men do for that County? why Friends, I may in some sort call you *the Wiltshire Parliament*, and I dare boldly say, if you will manage your business wisely, you may carry on the projects I shall propose, with as good success, as if you had Parliamentary Authority to back them: and you may raise sufficient money by voluntary contribution, as if you had power to lay a tax; and I dare say, 'twill be paid more willingly. Me thinks by this time your Attention asks me, *what would you have us to do?*

I shall name three projects, which I shall but name, as being more chargeable then the present times will bear.

First, To set up the light of the Gospel in all the dark places of your Countie.

Secondly, To raise a stock to set the poor on work, this stock when once raised, a small matter would continue it.

Thirdly, To maintain some poor Schollars, for some considerable time, at the University. If you will but think of these things, I may spare my labour in telling you the use of them. But I leave these; if any will but brood them between this and your next meeting, by that time these projects may be hatcht.

At present there are three things I shall crave leave to urge, as being more sensible then the former. The first will save many extravagant expences. The second may be done without much charge; and the third is resolved upon already by some, and I doubt not but will be embraced by all.

First then, put down all your *wicked Alehouses*, if you have any mind to be rid of prophaneness, put down your *base Alehouses*. These are the *Devils Nurseries*, where his children are instru-

instructed in the mysteries of iniquitie. There it is men harden themselves against the Gospel; and steep themselves, as if they would fain make themselves like sobby logges, of which the fire can have no power: but they are mistaken in the nature of hell-fire, for though the Sea should emptie it self into the bottomless pit, 'twould be as water upon lime, make it burn more fiercely. But there's not a drop of water to cool that tongue, that upon the *Ale-bench* sets it self against heaven.

Could I perswade you but to suppress *Tippling*, I should not doubt but prophaneity would receive its mortal wound. But I must adde, Those that undertake this business, must arme themselves with patience, and resolution, and manage it prudently; otherwise they will do more hurt, then good.

Secondly, set up pettie Schools in every Parish, or in every other Parish, to teach children to read, and let them be catechised every week. This though it may seem a difficult work, yet if you would all of you, according to your severall relations, to severall parts of the County, endeavour it: the work would be done speedily, as *Nehemiah* said of the building of the wall of *Jerusalem*, when every one took his part, and had a mind to the work (*Nehem.* 3. throughout.)

How many poor people may hereby come to knowledge? many whole families in the countrey have not any one person in them that can read: how can these learn any thing? how can these sanctifie a Sabbath? could their children but read, and were their children but taught the principles of christian Religion, it might be a more spreading good then you are aware of: and *one ten pounds would buy above two thousand Catechismes, which would yield a pretty handsome distribution to every Parish in your County.*

My third project is contrived to my hand, viz. the setting up of some weekly Lectures in places most destitute of the Gospel. Now it is not onely proposed, but resolved by the *Stewards* to set up two weekly Lectures for the year next ensuing, the one at *Trunbridge*, the other at *Calne*, upon their Market daies, and to allow five and twentie pounds to each of those two, godlie, able, and faithful Ministers, whom they will forthwith employ to preach there: and if your bountiful

contribution shal exceed that sum, the overplus shal be laid out, for the redeeming some of your country-men out of prison.

And now I have proposed these things, I am ready to believe, you will not need arguments to perswade their entertainment. I can scarce think of any thing to be objected against them. 'Tis true, carnal reason may say, these kind of projects will spoile your meeting, for when you intend a meeting for the continuation of friendship, and shall be imposed upon, to the picking of your purses; who will meet another time? if carnal reason make this objection, I hope Religion is well able to make an answer to it. 'Tis better never to meet, then meetly to eat, and drink, and rise up to play: may you not expect, that while the meat is yet between your teeth, the wrath of God may fall upon you: or at least, that God may send leanness into your soules. You know how Christ managed a great festival, John 7. 37, 38, 39. In that great day of the Feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink, He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. O do what you may, to bring sin-sick soules unto Christ: to lay them under the influences of the Spirit of grace: and to stop up sinners way with thornes. Jerom affirms that this was *Issachars* understanding of the times; they were (*inter alia*) *doctores ad festivitates*, their excellency lay in giving directions about Religious feasts; Though he may be mistaken in the interpretation of the Text, I am sure you will not be mistaken in the improvement of the Text, if you Religiously and industriously set your selves [*at this your Feast*] to doe your country some reall spirituall good.

But alas, tis not to be hoped that you shal all be unanimous in so good a design, there are but few will be drawn in to such an undertaking, I will grant this. But because there are but few will do any thing; therefore shall those few do nothing? because you meet with more reproach, then assistance, therefore you will forbear asking for God? why, by the same reason, you may forbear praying in your families, and hearing of Sermons, for these things are subject to reproach too.

But

But you do not know yet what to do, you apprehend more difficulty in these things, then you can at present foresee, or express. — And so you alwayes will, till you are reselved with christian courage to bear down difficulties, to turn over objections to be answered by faith, to beg wisdom of God by prayer, and to set down this with your selves, *God offers me an opportunity of doing good, how short it may be I know not: I cannot be faithfull unto God, nor so much as answer it to mine own conscience, if I do not trade my talents for my Masters greatest honour: I will therefore honour God with my substance: I will return him something, that gave me all.* Beloved, can you possibly rake up any demurre why you should not lay out your selves to the utmost for God; which God may not infinitely return upon you, why he should never have given Christ unto you? and why Christ should never have undertaken your reconciliation with God? can you meet with the difficulties Iesus Christ met with? can you meet with that contradiction of sinners, that Christ bore? He was not discouraged, He went up and down doing good. He left you an example, that you should follow his steps. Be followers of Christ as dear children. If the example be too high, take *Hezekiah*, 2 Chron 31. 21. *in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the Law, and in the Commandements, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.*

THE END.